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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004077

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SUBJECT: TURKS POSITIVE ON GAMBARI BREAKTHROUGH; STILL
CAUTIOUS ON PORTS

REF: NICOSIA 1088

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: The Turks have welcomed the weekend breakthrough by D/SYG Gambari, and they have taken on board, gradually, the need to use the weekend agreement as a springboard for further actions. The GOT stressed with Ambassador and visiting EUR DAS Bryza the need for some measure to reduce Turkish Cypriot (TC) isolation. This, they hope, would give them sufficient political cover to open at least some ports and avoid a fall EU accession train wreck. End summary.

12. (C) The progress that D/SYG Gambari achieved July 9 with Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos and "TRNC" leader Talat (reftel), and EUR DAS Matt Bryza's visit to Ankara afforded us ample opportunity to talk to the Turks. Even before the weekend, in separate meetings with D/US Apakan and the Cyprus desk, we sensed a shift away from "we can,t" and toward a more constructive attitude than we have seen of late.

13. (U) Publicly, the GOT has welcomed the weekend breakthrough. Responding to a question, MFA spokesman Namik Tan stated:

"We regard the meeting of the two leaders in Cyprus as a positive step. We believe that the technical committees ... will contribute to an atmosphere of confidence between the two sides. We think the consultations on issues related to a comprehensive solution should be taken up on the basis of the UNSYG,s Comprehensive Solution Plan (Annan Plan). We share and support the views and elements mentioned in the statement of 'TRNC President' Mr. Talat in his press conference following the above mentioned meeting."

14. (C) In the few days since the meeting on the island, GOT views have evolved gradually. They state in private, as in public, that they are fully supportive of the UN process, of Gambari, and of Talat's forward-leaning posture. Apakan told the Ambassador over the weekend that, in fact, the GOT hardly needed to lean on Talat; he was forward-leaning of his own accord.

15. (C) Apakan,s initial response, per British Ambassador Westmacott, was that the progress now meant the Turks had more space and could sit pat. Westmacott responded that exactly the opposite was true: the Turks needed to take the opening to get a step ahead and show their goodwill. When Bryza met with Apakan later that same day, Apakan's thinking had evolved to an understanding that the weekend agreement puts Cyprus back in the UN framework, precisely what the Turks want. "Annan Plan" may no longer be the operative term, but as long as it forms the basis, the Turks appear grudgingly to have agreed to look past language. Now Turkey was seeking to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, a

point all Bryza's contacts -- at MFA, the NSC, and at the PM's -- singled out as their most important short-term goal.

¶6. (C) Bryza pressed Apakan, other MFA officials, NSC SecGen Ambassador Alpogan and PM advisor Ahmet Davutoglu to be forward-leaning and produce a gesture to keep Turkey one step ahead. Bryza recognized that the Turks need something to ease the TCs' isolation and give them the domestic political cover to open at least some ports, thus avoiding a fall train wreck in their EU accession negotiations. Outgoing NSC SecGen Alpogan appeared the most forthcoming, but of those who wield real policy influence, Davutoglu appeared receptive, and Apakan gradually gained ground.

¶7. (C) The general outline exists -- de-isolation of the TCs, opening of Turkish ports to Cypriot shipping. There is, however, little consensus within the GOT on (1) what would constitute sufficient easing of TC isolation, and even less consensus on (2) what easing of TC isolation would open the door for the Turks to do. Possibilities discussed for easing TC isolation include:

--Direct flights, possibly charter, to Ercan airport. Apakan referred to direct charter flights from the UK, though Westmacott indicated that was tangled in bureaucracy. MFA officials mentioned charter tourist flights from Israel, or even cargo flights.

--The opening of Famagusta port, which Bryza explored, under some form of joint UN/EU oversight, with customs duties going straight to Brussels. The specific modalities were not discussed, but interlocutors were moderately receptive and this is on the Turkish radar screen.

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--Resurrecting the EU trade regulation in some form. Westmacott indicated the UK was sounding out contacts in Brussels on this, but also noted that, were the EU to succeed, the Turks would need to be prepared to accept language that, two years ago, they would not have swallowed. Turkish contacts stressed that an EU trade regulation would both give them sufficient domestic cover, and restore EU credibility here on the ground.

¶8. (C) The Turkish response to any of these solutions would, Bryza emphasized, need to be the opening of ports. If events were to be sequenced, the Turks could consider "temporarily" opening ports for a set period (perhaps two years), provided the trade regulation is forthcoming. Westmacott endorsed this approach as well with the Turks. He also noted that he was using all available channels to send PM Erdogan the message to stop boxing himself in with uncompromising public language. (Note: Erdogan has repeatedly stated -- albeit not since this past weekend -- that the GOT can do nothing else until TC isolation ends. End note.)

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